

American Government Essay Questions

Each student will be responsible for answering two essay questions throughout the semester, one for each quarter. Students will have the opportunity to choose from one of two questions from each grading period. The questions will focus on major themes we have discussed and students will be asked to further explore these topics of American Government.

The essays will be **3-4 pages** in length, double spaced, times new roman, 12 point font. Each essay will consist of an introduction, thesis statement, 3-5 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Outside research including a works cited page and in-text citations will also need to be included. Essays will be worth **50 pts** and will be graded based mainly on the depth of your analysis but deductions may occur with due to poor organization, word choice, sentence fluency, and/or proof reading.

First Quarter—Choose either essay #1 or #2 to write.

Question #1 (Ch 3)

1. Thomas Jefferson wrote, “The Constitution belongs to the living and not to the dead.”
 - (A) Identify and explain one constitutional provision that illustrates Jefferson’s statement. Give two examples of how the provision had an impact on public policy.
 - (B) Describe two ways the Constitution can be amended. Identify a constitutional amendment passed since 1960 and explain how the amendment changed public policy.

Question #2 (ch 3, 9)

2. Individuals often form groups in order to promote their interests. The Constitution contains several provisions that protect the rights of individuals who try to promote their interests in a representative democracy.
 - (A) Explain **two** provisions in the Bill of Rights that protect individuals who try to influence politics.
 - (B) Interest groups engage in a variety of activities to affect public policy. Explain how **two** of the following is used by interest groups to exert influence over policy.
 - Grassroots mobilization
 - Lobbying of government institutions
 - Litigation
 - (C) Describe **one** specific federal governmental regulation of interest groups.

Second Quarter—Choose either essay #3 or #4 to write.

Question #3 (ch 10-12)

3. In the United States Congress, the majority party has an advantage in passing legislation. However, even when one party has a majority, in either house, that party may still struggle to get legislation passed. The different rules each house has can affect the ability of legislation to pass or not. Even when legislation passes one house, it may not be able to survive the other.
- (A) Describe **two** advantages the majority party in the United States House of Representatives has in lawmaking. (You may not use the fact that they have more seats as an answer)
 - (B) Describe **two** differences between House and Senate rules that may make it likely that legislation may pass in one chamber but not in the other.
 - (C) Explain how **one** of the differences identified in (b) can lead to the passage of a bill in one chamber but not in the other.

Question #4 (ch 13)

4. A major feature of the Electoral College is the winner-take-all system
- (A) Describe the winner-take-all feature of the Electoral College
 - (B) Explain how the winner-take-all system discourages third party candidates from running
 - (C) Select and defend one proposed change to the Electoral College that could replace the winner-take-all system
 - (D) Explain two reasons why the Electoral College has not been changed or abolished